

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Inventory Data Data Not in EPS

PRESENTER: So this is kind of a follow-up to that, and, you know, the first time I heard Roy do the EPS talk, you know, and it came up yesterday, we heard a comment about, well, I was surprised that agriculture maybe wasn't a bigger -- didn't play a bigger role in Malheur County economy. And that is not an uncommon sentiment. And I heard that and we had heard it before and it made me think of a study that I had been part of, a little reluctantly, maybe, during the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project which some of you are probably familiar with, although it may be receding into your -- depths of your memory by now.

I'm going to talk about this a little later, so I won't go into it detail now, but one of the things that was done was people were asked about their local economies and what they thought the largest contributors were. And people tended in a lot of cases to overestimate the economic role of a lot of the traditional industries like timber and grazing and agriculture and mining. And in a lot of cases those were still, you know, a very important influence that contributed a significant proportion of jobs and income to a local community, but in a lot of places they had been supplanted by services.

And so this was kind of interesting, and then I came across a fishing research article that had found the same thing, that a lot of people in some coastal communities had tended to overestimate the role, the economic role, of fishing in the local economy. So this is kind of -- appears to be somewhat of a widespread

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phenomenon across several different types of communities.

So I uncovered this research article that had a couple explanations for that, and it says, "What you see is not always what you get. Aspect dominance is a confounding factor in the determination of fishing-dependent communities."

So what this -- this article kind of borrows some terms like social scientists seem to love to do, borrow some terms from ecology and apply them to social issues such as this. You know, why do people do this? And this article -- this research test add few hypotheses and found out that there were a few different represent possible explanations why people and to be overestimating the role of some of these traditional industries in their rural communities.

You know, one explanation was that, well, this -- in a lot of cases the economy may have formerly been dominated by this industry. So why do people still think that it is? Well, one explanation which should make sense to most people is kind of the cultural/social explanation. Even if a major industry like timber or mining or ranching has been supplanted by -- replaced by, you know, say, a wide variety of service industries, a lot of the identity of that community may still be tied up in that profession, and so although it's not economically dominant, the people's values may be in line with the values of that profession and that occupation. A lot of social networks in the community may still be dependent on that industry. And so it's these cultural and social ties that make people think, well, yeah, since this is dominant, it still must be dominant economically, too.

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Another reason is -- another possible explanation for this was -- was what was called a functional aspect of dominance, which is if you remove something from a system, you know, what if you removed would have the biggest effect on the system? So maybe, you know, this could come into play. And the authors of this report give kind of an example of that I don't really like, so I'm not going to dwell on it.

But another one is physiognomic. What takes up the most space? And this makes real sense to me in terms of, say, ranching or agriculture, because if you're driving through a county, for example, and all you see is farmland, or all you see is expanses of cattle grazing, you know, you might think that that is a dominant -- plays a dominant role in the economy, too. Just because it's what you see the most of, it takes up the most space.

And kind of a related one they called aspect dominance, which was what is kind of the most -- the most prominent. And when you think of like a town like Butte, you think of the pit. Or when you drive through Anaconda, or Andacoda, as they say, you used to see the stack, right? The smelter stack. Or in a timber town, the mill is usually very prominent. And retail stuff can be scattered all over or tucked away in a business center in the corner of a community. But this big dominant thing with a lot of employers -- lot of employees coming to one place, you know, could be viewed as -- could be associated with economic dominance in the community.

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And so these are just a few kind of social explanations for why people might have a tendency to overestimate the economic role of some of these traditional industries.

You know, another thing is, I thought it was interesting the way the question was posed on Roy's title slide, was "How important is ranching to Owahe County?" It wasn't "What's the -- is the economic contribution of ranching in Owahe County more than 10% of the total employment or total income?" It was how important it is. So, you know, how you ask this question is important, too, right? Because if you ask how important is ranching in the county, you're not really necessarily asking people about the economic role. So any of these answers could well be true. So just kind of food for thought. I thought that was kind of an interesting -- oh, it was there. I just didn't pop it up. I thought it was funny that I hadn't listed that on there. So kind of an interesting example of where literature from fishing interacts with some of the stuff that's applicable to BLM lands, and there are many other instances as well.

As kind of an aside, I'm really astounded that there's so little cross disciplinary interaction between marine scientists and terrestrial scientists. It's incredible. Because they have a lot to offer each other, but there doesn't appear to be a lot of cross fertilization taking place.

Okay. I have two slides here just to remind us of all the things that aren't in EPS, and it's kind of detached from the EPS discussion now, so it may not be as

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important, but, you know, we find that sometimes when people learn about new tools like EPS they say, "Oh, boy, it's all in one place. I can do this now," and you just can slap a few counties or a few communities in EPS and get the printout and have a workshop and you're done. And so these are just to remind us that that is not -- it's nice to have it available, but it is certainly not the whole picture. Some of the things not in EPS are things specific to your particular part of the world, whether it's recreation use patterns, detailed industry sector breakdowns which may be very important to a given place, for example, bicycle shops in a place like Moab. Something else that's not on this slide but that's really important obviously is what's the BLM role in providing -- in shaping these trends or in shaping these economic trends? You know, and where does the BLM play a lesser or greater role in the decisions we make, in the things we do?

Then there's a whole wide variety of social information that is very nice to have and important in a lot of cases that's not there, too.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: [inaudible]

PRESENTER: No.

PRESENTER: [inaudible]

PRESENTER: No. This is just kind of a sampling. There are many more things that could be added to this list that EPS does not provide. So the take-home

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message obviously is EPS is great but it's not going to tell the story by itself.